

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**MEDICAID NURSE FIRST HELPS MISSOULA MOM
CONTROL SON'S ASTHMA**

Disease Management Program Provides Education to Enable Proactive Response

When a registered nurse called Donna Stewart's home hoping to enroll her son in the State's Nurse First program, the Missoula mother was skeptical.

Her son, Jared Burkhart, had recently been diagnosed with asthma, and Stewart expected to receive a few pamphlets about the chronic disease in the mail and not much else.

"I didn't think I would get a lot of benefit, but it turns out I got a lot," Stewart said.

The information helped Stewart better assess Jared's asthma symptoms and recognize more clearly the nuances of an asthma attack.

Stewart is now comfortable talking with Jared's doctor about different asthma medications, inhalers and spacers after receiving information from Nurse First. She uses this information to help coordinate his care.

Nurse First is a disease management and nurse advice program that is available to approximately 65,000 Medicaid beneficiaries in Montana. The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services began providing the Nurse First program in January of this year.

"Nurse First's priority is to provide information and education that can be used every day by our Medicaid clients. We succeed when that information is put to action in the lives of those the program was designed to serve," said Health Resources Division Administrator Chuck Hunter.

In Jared's case, Nurse First gave his mother additional understanding about asthma's treatments and triggers, which enabled her to have in-depth discussions with her son's doctor.

"I was able to sit and talk to the nurse. She told me that a lot of symptoms that I saw were an indication that Jared was going to have trouble breathing," she said.

The registered nurse helped Stewart move past reaction -- one in which she waited for symptoms to arise before treating them -- to action.

"They told me I needed to be preventative," she said. "I was able to go to Jared's doctor with some extra knowledge about medications," Stewart added.

Jared's doctor confirmed the Nurse First recommendation and told Stewart that taking the medication would likely help prevent Jared's asthma attacks. Jared's mom reports that the severity of his asthma symptoms has decreased tremendously.

"He's been really good since we got all this information from the nurse. That plus the medication have made a big difference for Jared," she added.

When Stewart receives another scheduled follow-up call from Nurse First, she'll have the chance to ask even more questions and, more importantly, get the answers she needs to care for her son. Stewart also knows that she can call Nurse First any time to ask about Jared's asthma or other health concerns her family may have.

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